

Elmhurst receives \$10M grant for Metra station improvements

mysuburbanlife.com/2017/10/18/elmhurst-receives-10m-grant-for-metra-station-improvements/ab1xw2u/

By MARY STROKA Email
Follow



ELMHURST – The city of Elmhurst has been awarded \$10 million in grant funding through the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program toward improving the Elmhurst Metra Station, Mayor Steve Morley announced at the Oct. 16 City Council meeting.

The cost of remodeling the station is estimated to be between \$14 million and \$18 million, Morley said.

Morley considers the train station to be the first impression commuters and visitors get of the city, and the "outdated" station does not appropriately reflect the image of Elmhurst, he said after the meeting. The last remodeling of the train station was in the 1980s.

City Manager Jim Grabowski said after the meeting that the train station's current size doesn't meet the capacity of the number of commuters, and the upgrade is needed.

The Elmhurst Metra Station is the busiest stop on the Union Pacific West line and the seventh busiest station out of Metra's entire network of 236 stations, according to the city. It has more than 2,300 weekday boardings with a projected 30-percent increase in ridership in the next 20 years.

"It's time," Grabowski said.

Doug Ferguson, senior program analyst at the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which reviewed Elmhurst's request for grant assistance and allocated the funding to the city, said the program's goals of reducing congestion and improving air quality are aligned with the train station project since commuters are predicted to switch from automobile travel to transit and an overall increase in transit ridership at the train station is expected.

There were 105 applications submitted for the grant, and 39 applicants were selected, Ferguson said. The call for projects started in January, and applications needed to be in by March. A total of \$256 million in federal funds was allocated toward the projects that are intended to reduce congestion, improve air quality and enhance non-motorized transportation, according to an agency news release.

The Elmhurst Metra Station Improvement Project will include the construction of new inbound and outbound stations and warming shelters to expand commuter waiting areas, the city release stated.

Other proposed additions include a new pedestrian tunnel, bus and vehicular drop-off zone, increased bike parking and improved pedestrian crossings and sidewalk, according to the release. Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant improvements are needed for all areas of the station site. The improvements also create more green space, reducing stormwater runoff.

Firm CDM Smith was chosen from five submitted quotes for the architectural design and phase I engineering services for the reconstruction as part of the consent agenda at the Elmhurst City Council's June 6, 2016, meeting.

Community and commuter feedback was collected through two public workshops and an online survey last year. Elmhurst has worked with the Illinois Department of Transportation, Union Pacific Railroad and Metra, and the public input and various agencies' comments were used to identify appropriate improvements and develop the proposed final project, the release stated.

Elmhurst continues to apply for additional grant funding to leverage city dollars, according to the release. Phase II engineering is budgeted in 2018 with construction anticipated to begin in 2019.